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Official Proceedings.

COUNCIL CHAMBER,
TOPEKA, KANSAS.
Jan. 1, 1894.

Council met in regular monthly session. Present: Councilmen Holman, Ernest, Stevens, Ellinger, Burgess, Fellows, Fulton and Griggs—8. Absent: Troutman—1.

Mayor T. W. Harrison presiding.

The minutes of the meeting of Dec. 22, 1893, were presented, and on motion of Mr. Fellows the reading of the same was dispensed with and ordered approved as published in the official paper of the city.

Claims were presented and referred to the committee on claims and accounts on the several funds as follows:

General revenue fund..... \$2,042.54
Fire department fund..... 253.59
Metropolitan police fund..... 1,462.39
General improvement fund..... 1,163.14
Judgment fund, J. W. Kershner 250.00

\$5,398.75

The committee reported the several claims back and recommend payment of all except the claim of J. H. Kershner for \$250. They recommend payment of \$150. On motion the report was adopted.

The committee on ways and means reported back the claim of Elizabeth D. Hempstead of \$10,000 and recommended that it be referred to the city attorney; report adopted.

Same committee reported back the claim of William H. Low of \$1,500 for damages and claim of Thomas Peat of \$100.00 for hop tea toner, etc., taken, and recommend the rejection of both claims. On motion the report was adopted.

The committee on streets and walks reported back the resolution in relation to opening Brainerd street, between Fourth street and Sixth avenue, with the recommendation that the proper steps be taken to open it street.

On motion the report was adopted.

The committee on sewers and water works reported back the communication in reference to the flushing of sewers, with the recommendation that the finance committee be instructed to ascertain the cost of tank wagon and hose and purchase the same if it can be done within a limit of \$250. Report adopted.

A communication from P. G. Noel accepting the appointment as financial agent of the city was read and ordered placed on file.

The mayor then submitted the following:

"Gentlemen of the council: During the past week I have made a careful and thorough examination of the city buildings and city property, and it is but right and fair to you and the city that I should submit some communication in regard thereto. I examined the heat of each department to furnish an accurate inventory of all city property in his charge, giving his judgment as to its condition and utility. Most of them have cheerfully complied and expressed a ready willingness to co-operate with any suggestions that may be made. In the performance of my official duties I shall be free to command and compliment where it is deserved, and equally free to criticize and censure what appears to be wrong."

City Prison and Police Station.

"The general condition and surroundings of this building are abhorrent to the city. Its sanitary condition is most deplorable. The basement is in horrible condition. Dripping water seepages from water closets, foul air, vermin and filth make it an unfit place for the confinement of any human being. Because a person is a criminal or is expected of being a criminal is no reason why he should be confined in unhealthy quarters. The confinement of itself may tend to impair health, and when associated with foul air and general filth its effect must be apparent. Such punishment is not what the law contemplates for criminals. And unless those conditions are speedily remedied I shall personally superintend its complete renovation from basement to garret. The old furnace, which seems to be useless and rotting where it stands, should be moved out and sold for what it will bring. The plumbing should be carefully inspected and all leakage and dripping stopped. The bell-pew, which has so much discussed, was a horridous useless appendage and no fit place for the confinement of any person, human or animal. Whether the police authority had the right to remove it is an entirely different question. It had not been used for years, and there was probably no necessity for removing it arbitrarily without the assent of the mayor and council. The rock pile is in a low, wooden building which is rotting down and needs reconstructing and raising to a level with the sidewalk. It was never intended for the diversion of persons not criminals. The city prison is no place for any persons not criminals. Persons not charged with any criminal offense should not be confined or harbored there. Accommodations should be provided for them entirely away from criminal classes and criminal associations. For convicted criminals to work on the rock-pile within a building or suitable enclosure is far preferable and more sanitary than a public exhibition of their disgrace on the streets or other public places. Just across the alley, and in marked and startling contrast with the condition of the city prison, is the county jail, where the sanitary conditions and healthy surroundings seem to be well nigh perfect, where everything is scrubbed and secured and washed from top to bottom twice each week, and where no offensive or disgusting odors shock the sense of visitors or encanger the health of the occupants."

Fire Department.

"This department has four stations. The officers and men are alert, vigilant and effective and have and practice the true theory of a good fire department, that prevention is better than cure, and the first five minutes at the beginning of a fire are better than the last hour. They have commendable pride in their profession, and it is a skilled profession, far more dangerous and exacting and equally as honorable as many other calling which are known by that distinction."

"Station No. 1, in North Topeka, is a good two-story brick building. Six men and one substitute are quartered there, with hose cart, chemical engine, four horses and one old horse as an extra. The sanitary condition of the building is extremely bad, owing largely to no sewerage in that part of the city. The drippings of the horses have saturated the floor and basement until it is little or no better than an open cess pool. The water from the bath room is thrown out of a second story window

upon a vacant lot. All this should be remedied as soon as it can possibly be done. The basement door should be thoroughly disinfected and then properly covered with a good floor of concrete and cement. An outside closet should be provided until sewerage can be had. A water closet should be put in the bath room for the convenience of the men and properly connected with the cesspool; a new main floor should be laid similar to that in station No. 3, with the addition of a screened cage-latin directly under each horse, properly connected with the drainage. Station No. 2 is the headquarters in rear of the city building. The fire marshal, assistant fire marshal, nine men and one substitute are here, with hose wagon, chemical engine, steam engine, hose carriage, five horses and two extra horses. The building and room are wholly inadequate and not appropriate for the headquarters fire station, and it is difficult to see how the department can adapt itself to such quarters and do the effective service which it performs.

"The ventilation is very bad and the sanitary condition is still worse. Noxious fumes from the horses' stalls constantly permeate the entire station, including the sleeping apartments of the men. The department and service bays entirely outgrow this station. It is only fifty feet square on the alley end of the lots, with inadequate room, no yard, insufficient light and air, and no opportunity to improve these defects in its present location. As soon as it can possibly be done, this station should be removed to suitable ground of its own and a building erected that would furnish adequate room and comfort with the growth, needs and dignity of this progressive city. Station Number three, at 312 Jefferson street, is a two-story brick building, and having been recently repaired, is in better condition than either of the other two mentioned. There are sixteen men and one substitute, with hose wagon and two horses. The firemen and leaders are not such as the department should have. They are untrained and might be compared to small boys with toy buildings, but they are liable to come to our city where they would be entirely inadequate and in which they might result in dire disaster. As soon as it can be done, new leaders and a new truck should be procured, which would add greatly to the efficiency of our fire department."

"Station No. Four, at 613 Clay street, is the new frame building recently constructed. Here are three men and one substitute, with hose wagon and two horses.

"I find at some of the stations the force of men is so short that when called out to a fire no one belonging to the fire service is left in charge of the station, but outside persons not in the employ of the fire service are permitted to remain and sleep there in order to leave some one to care for the property during the absence of the firemen. I think that is wrong and that no person not employed in the department should be permitted to remain. Enough substitutes or second-class firemen ought to be kept so that some one in the employ of the department and responsible to the city would at all times be in charge of the property and station.

"I find that from two to five tons of loose prairie hay is kept stored in the second story of each of the stations except No. 4. This is an exceedingly dangerous thing, as is attested by the charred walls inside the hay room at station No. 2, just in the rear of the city building. No such an invitation for a disastrous fire would be tolerated in any other business building in the city. Certainly the city ought to follow the example which it requires from all its business citizens. This should be practically remedied by the use of hay bail and keeping it stored some distance away, and have small quantities delivered daily or every second day at each station.

"The additional expense would be quite inconsiderable when compared with the difference of risk from fire and cost of insurance.

"Permit me to suggest, of course to correction whenever in order, and with all due respect for the officers and men of this valuable department that with the cramped condition of the city firemen it might be better for the men themselves for the horses and for the service generally, if less money should be expended for salaries and more used for the health, comfort and protection of the men and horses. More men could be employed, more substitutes and second-class firemen could be kept in the service so that more absence could be allowed to the regular men as a relief from that constant strain which is so wearisome, and most results even in the breaking them down or destroying some of their facilities. More horses should be kept, so that each horse in turn might have an occasional day off duty to tramp or roll in some lot or pasture, for the best service and wear and tear but from an animal kept constantly under the strain of constant load.

"Permit me to suggest, of course to correction whenever in order, and with all due respect for the officers and men of this valuable department that with the cramped condition of the city firemen it might be better for the men themselves for the horses and for the service generally, if less money should be expended for salaries and more used for the health, comfort and protection of the men and horses. More men could be employed, more substitutes and second-class firemen could be kept in the service so that more absence could be allowed to the regular men as a relief from that constant strain which is so wearisome, and most results even in the breaking them down or destroying some of their facilities. More horses should be kept, so that each horse in turn might have an occasional day off duty to tramp or roll in some lot or pasture, for the best service and wear and tear but from an animal kept constantly under the strain of constant load.

"From the fire marshal's report that twelve hundred feet of new poles must be soon planted and that 250 new poles might be set for the telephone service of this department, it would be suggested that whenever it can be done, and especially in laying new roads, that a screened catch basin be put in each stall in such a way as to carry off all slops and prevent the stables odors which can hardly be avoided in any other way.

"Nearly all the city buildings and their yards and fences, where they have any, show a want of care, not at all in keeping with the good name of our city. All yards belonging with city buildings should be cleaned and made neat, and all city buildings should be kept in good repair and well painted in some suitable and uniform color for their preservation, and so that they might be readily recognized as city property.

"I make these suggestions well knowing that it is impossible to carry them all into effect with the present condition of the city finances, but in order that the council may be apprised of the facts and with the urgent hope that some of them may at least crystallize into certain action at the earliest possible moment.

"I would also suggest that the extension of the electric light system, and the necessity of providing the entrance to their cars with suitable gates to be kept closed on the site next to a double track, and especially where there are center poles in the street. Some accidents have already occurred by persons colliding against the poles when getting off the cars, and the lives and limbs of the people are of far greater importance than the expense of procuring and using these gates. I have no doubt but what a mere

request from the council that this be done would receive the hearty co-operation of the company in this matter.

"There are many other things to which I would like to call your attention, but this communication is already so long that I shall leave them until some subsequent meeting of the council.

Respectfully Submitted,

T. W. HARRISON, Mayor.

The communication was ordered placed on file.

The mayor then presented and read to the council his message vetoing the ordinance passed by the council Dec. 22, 1893, being "An ordinance fixing the salaries and compensation of city officers and employees and repealing ordinances No. 1692 and 1693," as follows:

"Gentlemen of the Council:

"I have considered the resolution adopted by the council on December 22, 1893, seeking to dispense with the services of Sanitary Policeman A. Barton and Dog Tax Collector John Jones, after January 1, 1894, and herewith return the same without my approval.

"What I have said with regard to the secret session of members of the council on the ordinance fixing the salaries of city officers and employees applies also to this resolution.

"I think that the people of the city are fairly entitled to the honest judgment and conscientious action of the members of the council, and that it is better that the same be expressed in open council rather than in secret session.

"I am informed by the city physician that the members of the council, from which this other members the city clerk and all other persons were studiously excluded, were closed, a presiding officer and secretary were elected, the provisions of this ordinance adopted, the secretary instructed to report it to the council and a solemn pledge of secrecy taken with the uplifted right hand to stand by the decision of a majority vote of that meeting.

"On many of its most important provisions the members were divided four to five. One final vote in the council it received the support of the entire nine, which shows that the honest convictions of some of them were overcome by the pledge in that secret meeting.

"I permit me to suggest, and I do it in all kindness, that this is not the proper way to transact public business of this kind. Barred doors, and grips and seals and iron-end pledges and secret meetings in out of the way places may be all right in the social lodge rooms, but they have no place in the legislative business of the city council.

"The humblye person to know at all times what the city council is doing and to ask for or protest against any contemplated action if he so desires. And while I shall have the honor to provide as chief executive officer of this city, the people are cordially invited and will be heartily welcome to attend and listen to the deliberations of this honorable body.

"Nor are the provisions of this ordinance free from objection.

"It is based upon the theory of giving large salaries to a few officers, thereby impoverishing the city funds and leaving that much less to pay common laborers for city work. It tends to make the few opulent and to impoverish the many.

"That theory would be to an army of officers with no private work under them, and nothing for them to do but draw their salaries. It is far better for the city that there may be a possible of the laboring people should be kept employed, even if we have to get along with moderately paid officials rather than that the officers should be permitted to absorb the bulk of the city funds and the laborers be left to go without work.

"The city funds are limited by law. We must not allow any floating debt for city expenses. It is far better to distribute the money by the employment of many who depend upon manual labor for the support of their families than to allow it to be drawn by a few whose full and experience may command for their valuable services more than the city can afford to pay. There is no use of being sentimental upon this subject. The cold facts confront us. We are sworn officers whose duty is to look after the best interests of the city and the welfare of all its people. It is not a question of how much a man's services may be worth to himself or other parties, nor how much his knowledge or experience may have cost him, but how much the city can afford to pay and get that service which the public interests require. This ordinance is drifting back towards the same old rut which for years created a floating debt and gave to the city's employees but 25 cents on the dollar for the service they received and were obliged to sell, while the profits from that slave went into the pockets of money-lenders, to the detriment and loss of the city and those who labored for it. The officers, no doubt, are solicitous for their personal interests and can readily reach the ears of the councilmen, while the hundreds of common laborers who are entitled to consideration and employment by the city have only to wait and accept whatever chance may be left over for them. I beg to assure the best interests of the city and the welfare of all its people. It is not a question of how much a man's services may be worth to himself or other parties, nor how much his knowledge or experience may have cost him, but how much the city can afford to pay and get that service which the public interests require. 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